

## *Full Length Research Paper*

# **Interplay between Conflict Management and Academic Staff Performance in Lagos State University: Implications for Educational Planning**

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Received 2 March 2020; Accepted 9 April, 2020

The study investigated the interplay between conflict management and academic staff performance; it also examined the effect of strike action on academic staff commitment in Lagos State University. The study adopted a descriptive design. The population of the study consists of all the academic staff of Lagos State University (LASU) which cuts across all the fourteen (14) faculties, centres, schools and colleges in the University. The study adopted simple random sampling techniques to select two hundred and eleven (211), respondents. Data collected were analyzed with both descriptive and inferential statistics and test of hypothesis done at a 5% level of significance.

Findings from the study revealed that there is a strong positive correlation between conflict management and academic performance. On the basis of the findings, the study advocated for good welfare for workers to avert incessant industrial action, provision of adequate facilities and organizing seminars, conferences, and symposia for the management cadre from time to time amongst others.

**Keywords:** Conflict, conflict management, academic staff performance

## **INTRODUCTION**

Education serves as the means of transmitting society's culture, establishing the present and improving or changing the future from one generation to another. It is the process of bringing about relative permanent change in human behaviour. As the oldest industry, it is the main instrument used by society to preserve, maintain and upgrade its social equilibrium. In any given society, Education is very important. It is a process by which abilities and capabilities of individual are developed. These abilities might be physical, emotional, social and intellectual abilities. It is the actualizing of human potential so that the individual can be useful to himself and the society. According to Gabriel, (2013) education is the process by which society establishes to assist the young to learn and understand the heritage of the past, participate productively in the society and contribute

meaningfully for the development of the society. For several decades, according to Bloom et al. (2005) African countries and the donor institutions they work with have placed great emphasis on primary and, more recently, secondary education. But they have neglected tertiary education as an added means to improve economic growth and mitigate poverty. But In recent years, as observed by Bloom et al. (2005) organizations such as the World Bank and major donor governments have conceded that tertiary schooling may have a positive impact on economic development.

Schramm-Nielsen (2002) defines a conflict as a state of serious disagreement and argument about something perceived to be important by at least one of the parties involved. Conflict can be referred to as a disagreement between two or more parties who perceive that they have

incompatible concerns. It occurs in a situation that an action or inaction of one group is preventing or conflicting with the goals, objectives, needs or actions of another group.

Conflict can be regarded as a reality of management and organizational behaviour and can be related to power and politics. Mullins, (2005) sees conflict as behaviour intended to obstruct the achievement of some other person's goals. According to this author, conflict is based on the incompatibility of goals and arises from opposing behaviours. It can be viewed at the individual, group or organizational level.

Okoli et al. (2017) observed that organizations like the public universities in the south east are made up of people from different background, different views about life, different expectations and different mind-sets. These group of people are brought together to ensure that the institutions mandate of producing quality graduates to drive the affairs of not just the country but that of the world is achieved.

To achieve this lofty goal, the employees have to work together in different capacities; it could be belonging to the same departments or committees or teams. They would have to share ideas and perceptions about things.

Modern organizational environments are becoming more complex; the environment and communication processes within them also become more diverse and interactive.

Employees' commitment is pertinent and important for organization that wants maximum productivity and creativity from its workers. As a result, employees have been identified as a rich source of feedback to address and solve work problems and issues (Detert and Burris, 2007; Morrison and Milliken, 2000).

Staff Performance is the behaviour that can be evaluated in terms of the extent to which it contributes to organizational effectiveness.

Performance is the behaviour and outcomes that employees engage in which are linked with or contribute to organizational goals. Measures of staff performance in most firms include sales growth, return of investment (ROI), market share gains and overall competitive position (Adavbiele, 2015). It is therefore clear from the argument that performance is related to the extent to which an employee or organization is able to accomplish assigned tasks and how the accomplished tasks contribute to the realization of the organizational goals. Lagos State University is faced with series of problems ranging from inadequate facilities to lack of infrastructures. Other problems include: coping with upsurge in the number students admitted, insufficient funding, frequent industrial action or strike, lack of good policies implementation, which may hinder inter-personal relationships as well as performance of workers. The purpose of the study was to ascertain the interplay between conflict management and academic staff performance in Lagos State University.

## Concept of conflict management

Rahim, (2001) stated that conflict may be interpersonal which is occurring between a supervisor and his subordinate or between two individuals at the same level of the organizational hierarchy or inter group with which often occur between two trade unions, between two departments or between management and workers while attempting to implement the policies and programme of the organization. In the words of Luthans, (2001) people at work may encounter conflict at the intrapersonal level (within an individual), the interpersonal level (individual to individual conflict), the intergroup level (conflicts among groups or team), or the inter-organizational level (conflict among organization).

Digvijaysinhm, (2013) maintain that as long as organizations continue to use work teams, conflict cannot be avoided since it is an inevitable aspect of work teams. Conflict is an outcome of behaviors. It is an integral part of human life. Whenever there is interaction there is conflict. Conflict means expression of hostility, negative attitudes, antagonism, aggression, rivalry, and misunderstanding. It is also associated with situations that involve contradictory interest between two opposing groups. It can be defined as a disagreement between two or more individuals or groups with each individual or group trying to gain acceptance of its view over others. In words of Mba, (2013) the word conflict brings to mind images such as antagonism, struggles between parties, opposition processes and threats to cooperation. It is a disagreement over social issues, beliefs and ideologies.

Ojo and Abolade, (2014) stated that Conflicts are inevitable. Conflicts are an everyday phenomenon in each organization. There is growing recognition of the importance of conflict in an organization. A recent survey indicated that managers spend a considerable portion of their time dealing with conflict and that conflict management becomes increasingly important to their effectiveness Conflict involves the process in which an individual or a party perceives its interests is being jeopardized or negatively affected by another party. It is important to note that in this process, attitudes, values, and styles play an important role in determining whether conflict leads to beneficial or destructive outcomes many people view conflict as an activity that is almost totally negative and has no redeeming qualities. While other schools of thought accepted it as dysfunctional, destructive, and the same times as a catalyst for change, creativity and production. Dysfunctional or Destructive Conflicts are the type of conflict that hinders organizational performance. This kind of conflict has negative outcome whereby some people felt defeated, distance between people increased, a climate of suspicion and distrust developed, people and departments that needed to co-operate looked after only their own narrow interests, persistence-active or passive developed were team work was needed, and that some

people left because of the turmoil.

### Brief history of education in Nigeria

From 1842 when the missionary bodies first established the first primary school in Nigeria till 1859, there was no secondary grammar school established in Nigeria. The first secondary school was established in 1859 at Lagos by the C.M.S. unfortunately, it took the colonial government in Nigeria about 73 years, and from the date the first secondary school was established in 1859, to establish a higher education institution in Nigeria. The first Higher Education institution established in Nigeria was the Yaba Higher College (Lagos). It was established in 1932 by the colonial government, but commenced studies in 1934. In 1948, The University College Ibadan was created, starting with just 104 students. The number of universities rose from one to five in 1962. And in the 1970s and 1980s, an appreciable number of higher institutions were established.

### Hypothesis

**H<sub>0</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between conflict management and academic staff performance in Lagos State University.

### METHODOLOGY

The Research Design adopted for this study is Descriptive Design. It is descriptive because the study described the nature of relationship that exists between conflict management and academic staff performance in Lagos State University. The population of the study consists of all the academic staff of the Lagos State University (LASU) which is seven hundred and three (703). This population cuts across the various departments and faculties, such as faculty of Arts, Faculty of Education, University Library, Centre For Planning Studies, Centre for Environmental Science Education and Development (CESSED) Lagos State University College of Medicine (LASUCOM), School of Agriculture, Faculty of Law, Faculty of Management Sciences, Faculty of Social-Sciences, Faculty of Engineering, Faculty of Sciences School of Communication and School of Transportation (Table 1).

### Sample and sampling techniques

The study adopted Simple Random Sampling Technique. The sampling technique was used to select 30% of the academic staff from the Lagos State University (LASU). Hence, the sample size is 211.

### Research instrument and instrumentation

Data collection was done using Questionnaire on the Interplay between Conflict Management and Academic Staff Performance in Lagos State University (QIBCOMASPEL). The questionnaires were structured to ensure easy response. The questionnaire was divided into two sections. Section A solicited for information on respondent's bio-data, while section B focused on effect of conflict management on academic staff performance in Lagos State University. 4 point Likert scale was adopted in the questionnaire. The measurement ranges from;

**SA** = Strongly Agree

**A** = Agree

**D** = Disagree

**SD** = Strongly Disagreed.

### RESULTS

Data collected were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Responses were classified according to sex, marital status, age group, and educational qualification of the respondents. The data analysis techniques were simple percentage distribution and correlations test statistics. A total 211 copies of questionnaires were administered to the respondents, while 197 were properly filled and returned for the data analysis. Test of hypothesis was done at 5% level of significance.

### Information of respondents

Table 2 shows that 61.4% of the respondents are male while the remaining 38.6% were female. This implies that majority of the surveyed respondents were male. Table 3 shows that 84.8% of the respondents are married, 13.2% are single while 2% of the total respondents were divorced. It implies that people participated more in the research study than any other marital group. Table 4 shows that respondents within 20-29 years are 9.1%, 30-39 years are 24.4% while 40 years and above are 66.5%. This result implies that academic staff above the group of 40 years participated more in the research study. Table 5 shows that 2% of the respondents have B. Sc/B. Ed, 10.7% obtain +PGDE, 51.3% of the respondents obtain M.Ed./MPA /M.A. / MBA/M.Sc. while others (with other educational qualifications) are 36% of the total respondents. It implies that the respondents are learnt enough to contribute their views on the subject matter of this research. Table 6 shows that 3.6% of the respondents have 1-5 teaching experience; 10.2% are in the frequency of 6-10 years of teaching experience, while 86.3% of the total respondents have above 11 years of teaching experience.

**Table 1.** Lagos State University, Ojo Academic Staff

S/N	FACULTY/ACADEMIC DEPARTMENT	PROFESSOR	ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR	SENIOR LECTURER	LECTURER I	LECTURERE II	ASSISTANT LECTURER	GRADUATE ASSISTANT	TOTAL
1	Arts	11	16	33	23	6	4	3	96
2	Education	22	9	15	3	4	4	2	59
3	University Library	-	1	8	2	23	4	-	16
4	Centre For Planning Studies	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
5	Centre for Environmental Science Education and Development (CESSED)	-	-	1	1-	-	-	-	2
6	Lagos State University College of Medicine (LASUCOM)	31	30	50	51	6	9	-	177
7	School of Agriculture,	2	2	2	-	-	1	-	7
8	Faculty of Law,	4	3	7	9	3	2	-	28
9	Faculty of Management Sciences,	10	17	14	17	11	4	3	76
10	Faculty of Social-Sciences,	8	6	18	17	5	2	3	59
11	Faculty of Engineering,	5	4	7	6	9	2	2	35
12	Faculty of Sciences	17	24	27	25	11	5	3	112
13	School of Communication	2	1	5	11	3	3	1	26
14	School of Transportation	1	-	2	2	2	2	-	9
	Grand Total	113	108	195	150	60	42	17	703

Source: Academic Staff Establishment (2019)

**Table 2.** Sex distribution

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Male	121	61.4	61.4
Female	76	38.6	100.0
Total	197	100.0	

Source: Field study, (2016).

**Table 3.** Marital status.

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Married	167	84.8	84.8
Single	26	13.2	98.0
Divorced	4	2.0	100.0
Total	197	100.0	

Source: Field study, (2016).

**Table 4.** Age frequency.

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 20-29yrs	18	9.1	9.1
30-39yrs	48	24.4	33.5
40yrs above	131	66.5	100.0
Total	197	100.0	

Source: Field study, (2016).

**Table 5.** Education qualification.

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid B.Sc/B. Ed	4	2.0	2.0
+PGDE	21	10.7	12.7
Master Degrees	101	51.3	64.0
Others	71	36.0	100.0
Total	197	100.0	

Source: Field study, (2016).

**Table 6.** Teaching experience.

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1-5 Years	7	3.6	3.6
6-10 Years	20	10.2	13.7
11years above	170	86.3	100.0
Total	197	100.0	

Source: Field study, (2016).

**Table 7.** Pearson Correlations.

		CONMGT	ASPERF
CONMGT	Pearson Correlation	1	0.796 (**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	197	197
ASPERF	Pearson Correlation	0.796 (**)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	197	197

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

## Test of hypothesis

### Decision criteria

If the P-value (level of sig.) is less than 5% ( $P < 0.05$ ), the null hypothesis is rejected, otherwise accepted.

**H<sub>0</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between conflict management and academic staff performance in Lagos State University.

The result in Table 7 indicates a strong positive correlation between the independent variable and dependent variable with the R value of 0.796. The P value which represents the probability of accepting the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) falls short of the decision rule. Based on this result, the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) that says there is no significant relationship between conflict management and academic staff performance in Lagos State University is rejected while the alternative hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) that states there is a significant relationship between conflict management and academic staff performance in Lagos State University is accepted. Hence, it is concluded that there is a significant relationship between conflict management and academic staff performance in Lagos State University.

## DISCUSSION

The result of the study revealed that there is a significant relationship between conflict management and academic staff performance in Lagos State University. This result is in consonance with the findings of Mba, (2013) whose result indicated that significant relationship exists between conflict management strategies (integrating style) and employees' performance.

Also, Tulubas and Celep, (2012) examined the impact of employee procedural justice on silence behavior among university faculty members. They concluded that procedural justice has a significant impact on silence among university faculty members.

The analysis of three components of justice indicated that silence among faculty members is significantly affected by these components. In addition, trust in supervisor was found to significantly mediate the relationship between procedural justice and silence. The finding is also in line with Okoli et al. (2017) who find out that conflict management strategy has a significant positive relationship with employee commitment. That is, if the conflict management style adopted by employees in conflict is such that a win-win situation is sought; a situation where the parties have high concern for themselves and for the other person a people, then this will influence the commitment level of the employees positively towards the organization.

## Implications of conflict on educational planning

Industrial conflict affect the activities of the entire university management including planning and effective decision making by disrupting academic schedules, programme and plans. ASUU strike has crippled the educational system in Nigeria with a whole lot of ripple effect (Monogbe and Monogbe, 2019).

### Abandonment of programme or loss of interest in continuing programme

Due to the incessant industrial activities of the ASUU, most students deem it fit to venture into the street in search for greener pasture in which they earn a stipend. As such, they find it difficult to go back to school upon resumption. Some of the students are not even planning to go back to school due to the huge amount of money there earn and doubt the opportunity of getting such job that will promise a huge sum of money after school.

### Little or no interest on the Nigerian educational system

Due to regular industrial action of the strike by ASUU, most parent and student has lost hope in the Nigerian educational system as the majority of parents who can afford to send their children abroad are doing so while those who cannot foot the traveling bill register their children in the private university in the country.

### Inconsistent academic calendar system resulting from the industrial action of a strike

Academic programme that was supposed to last for four years may extend to five or six years due to prolong ASUU strike. The effect of this prolonged period of strike well not only tell on the student duration on campus but also on the rent of the student as they are expected to pay for the house rent even when school is off section. Oladipo, (2012) stated that strike would result in the academic calendar being compressed and parts of the curriculum skipped, some topics would not be treated and the students would have to write the exams like that, resulting in poor performance and decline in quality of education. The immediate effect of the strike is obviously adverse. According to Amadi and Urho, (2015) most academic activities for school year are distorted. This is one of major cause of producing unqualified graduate who are deficient in their fields of study. In the same vein, students who are supposed to do a four year course end up spending six years in the school. Monogbe and Monogbe, (2019) also stated that, industrial action in schools distorts academic plans and programmes.

It keeps students out of schools and makes them open to social vices such as prostitution, armed robbery and indolence.

## Conclusion

Conflict is an inevitable outcome of humans, groups and state interactions. The study has shown that conflict is a process, and it is inevitable because individual has interdependent relationship. It is generally perceived as unwholesome because of its destructive manifestations in terms of killings, maiming and destruction of property. The fact however remains that even though we agree that conflict is a necessary evil, there is need to avoid it where possible because of its dysfunctional consequences.

## Recommendations

The findings of this study inform the following recommendations:

Seminars, conferences and symposia for the management cadre in the field of educational management should be organized from time to time. Government should look into the issue of workers' welfare to avert the incessant industrial actions, and provide adequate facilities in schools.

## Authors' declaration

I declared that this study is an original research that was carried out by me and I agree to publish it in the journal.

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